

from Katrina and Rita, oil and natural gas production can be disrupted to the detriment of consumers throughout the United States because production is too concentrated in the gulf coast region.

To correct these problems, I have introduced H.R. 3811. This legislation would allow for safe oil and natural gas exploration along the Outer Continental Shelf. This bill would do away with all appropriation moratoriums and executive orders that limit leasing activities, while maintaining environmental safeguards.

It is imperative that the United States begin drilling in other parts outside of the gulf. Madam Speaker, as my colleagues can see from this map, there is a wide range of areas where we can drill. Right now, the United States drills right here off my home State of Texas and Louisiana; yet, there is crude oil still in the Gulf of Mexico, on the east coast and, yes, Madam Speaker, even off the sacred coast of California. It is imperative that we think and consider drilling in these areas.

Since the 1980s, Congress has been placing appropriations moratoriums on drilling on all of these red areas that are outlined on this map. They are doing so by withholding leases. It started in California, and now about 90 percent of the Outer Continental Shelf is off limits to energy developments. All these people on these coastal States want cheap gasoline, they want natural gas, but they say do not drill in our neighborhood.

Madam Speaker, this is hypocritical. This does not make sense. It violates common sense. In this Outer Continental Shelf, there are about 300 cubic feet of natural gas and more than 50 billion barrels of oil yet to be discovered, enough to replace current imports from the Persian Gulf for 60 years and produce sufficient natural gas to heat 75 million homes for 60 years.

Madam Speaker, it would seem to me that opening up these areas would be the obvious choice. We are the only major industrial power in the world that has this silly rule about not drilling off our own shores. They drill in the North Sea, and around the world, and yet, they do so safely.

My bill would allow the Department of the Interior's Mineral and Mining Service to begin processing these leases. This would bring in additional lease revenue to Americans. Right now, Americans are receiving in this blue area \$7.5 billion a year in lease revenue. Imagine what we could get from these red areas if we allowed drilling in these areas.

It is important that we use some common sense. Americans worry about skyrocketing energy prices and want solutions. The decision on where to drill is going to have to be made and made soon. This is a price issue, but it is also a national security issue.

Hurricane season is not over and it will be back next year. It is inevitable that more storms will come down hur-

ricane alley right here in the gulf, and they are going to stop in Louisiana or Texas. With all the rigs in the same place, we are destined to repeat history. Although most of the rigs survived Hurricanes Rita and Katrina with minimal damage, there will be more storms, wind and disasters.

Those that say no to offshore drilling have no solutions to the energy problem. We can drill offshore safely, environmentally correct, when you get over the fear factor proposed by the anti-drilling people, and take control of our own energy needs. Otherwise, Madam Speaker, we will freeze in the dark. That is just the way it is.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. SCHMIDT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. FORBES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. FORBES addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. DREIER. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the 5 minutes that the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) would have had.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

#### THE GROWTH OF THE U.S. ECONOMY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DREIER. Madam Speaker, I rise this afternoon to talk about a very important issue which, frankly, has not gotten a great deal of attention and that is the growth of the U.S. economy and what it is we have been able to see over the past several weeks and months.

Virtually everyone has acknowledged the fact that Hurricane Katrina was, if not the worst, one of the worst natural disasters to hit the United States of America, and we all know that in the wake of that disaster where we saw the tragic loss of life and, of course, the devastation of property along the gulf coast, we assumed that there would be a very, very deleterious effect on the U.S. economy. Today, we received what is news that is not what you would call overwhelmingly positive, but certainly not news that was anything like what had been anticipated.

Today, we received the news that following the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina there has been a net job loss based on the payroll survey, which is the old survey structure that has been put into place to determine the jobless rate in the country, a payroll jobs rate reduction of 35,000 nationwide.

Madam Speaker, I think it is important to note that many economists had predicted that that job loss number was going to be in excess of 200,000 in the wake of the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita. I think it is important to also recognize that as we focus attention from the United States Congress and the State and local officials, the President of the United States, focus on reconstruction, dealing with the tragic circumstances in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, one of the most important things we can do is to make sure that the entire U.S. economy continues to grow as boldly and as dynamically as possible.

Let us look at the policies that we have seen put into place that have led to tremendous economic growth. We saw throughout the year of 2004 gross domestic product growth of 4.4 percent, a very positive sign of growth. This year, the number has not been quite as high, about 3.3 percent on average of GDP growth. So we have gone through the 15th quarter of positive economic growth, a very, very good indicator of what we can do as a Nation to help address the needs of those who have been victimized by this natural disaster.

One of the things that has happened is we have seen many people from that region obviously find job opportunities in other parts of the Nation. I was in my original hometown of Kansas City, Missouri, just a few weeks ago, and I met a man who said he had worked at Brennan's Restaurant in New Orleans, and he is now working in a food service capacity in Kansas City. Obviously, economic growth in other parts of the country played a role in creating opportunities for people who were subjected to that horrible natural disaster.

So, Madam Speaker, one of the things that we have got to do is make sure that we continue to keep in place our very positive, pro-growth, pro-trade, pro-economic opportunity policies.

Now, what are those policies? Those policies obviously consist of tax reduction. Tax reduction has stimulated the economy and, in fact, as we all know, generated a level of revenues to the Federal Treasury that exceeded expectations. In fact, it exceeded expectations to the point where we have now received \$94 billion in unanticipated revenues to the Federal Treasury, reducing the deficit projection from the February projection by, as I said, \$94 billion.

Madam Speaker, that is a very positive sign. It is not a Republican number that I am offering. That is a number that has come from the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office. Again, it is tax cuts that have brought